

# A to Z : The Newsletter of STC's Indexing SIG

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September, 2001

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## From the Editor:

One of the hardest things I have had to do is put this newsletter together the week after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. We are all deeply affected by these events, and wish to send our thoughts and our sympathy to all the families and friends of those who were caught in this nightmare.

I usually make a wish that "your indexes always compile!" I hope for more this time. I hope we never see anything like this horror again.

On a different subject, this is our last issue with Bill Graham as Upcoming Events editor, and we will miss his input. He's been a delight to work with, and has collected worldwide indexing information for us all to use. Thanks so much for all your hard work, Bill, and best wishes. Look for the announcement of a new events editor shortly.

Jan C. Wright



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

by Bill Collins



## eflections on STC 2001

STC conferences offer an unparalleled opportunity for technical communicators to:

- ❖ interact with peers from companies large and small
- ❖ evaluate how our skills stack up against colleagues and competitors
- ❖ assess trends in support packages and vendor offerings
- ❖ get reenergized about our profession by sharing the wisdom of some of the acknowledged masters in the field and by learning about the work, issues, successes, and failures of some of the 2,300 attendees from around the world

Overall, I thought the Chicago conference was one of the best STC conferences that I've attended. The quality of the sessions was quite high, the enthusiasm of the participants was infectious, and the host city offered spectacular vistas and intriguing architecture.

### General Highlights

The conference opened with a reception featuring stilt-walking

aliens dancing to a live band; it closed with a very funny and informative address by English language maven Richard Lederer. In between, attendees were faced with the difficult task of selecting their top 10 technical session choices from among the 218 offered by 425 presenters.

The keynote speaker, Dewitt Jones, a National Geographic photographer and speaker of compelling eloquence, was a true highlight of the entire conference for many attendees and a recurring topic of conversation all week long. Dewitt's presentation, which featured examples of how to cultivate vision, passion, and creativity in one's work, was deeply inspiring, brought tears to the eyes of many a veteran, jaded conference-goer, and earned a spontaneous, prolonged standing ovation at its close. You really had to be there to appreciate the impact: a gentleman attending my post-conference workshop said of the keynote address, with great sincerity, "It has changed my life." One nugget from Dewitt's talk that I would stress to indexers was his

*Continued on next page*

admonition that the key to creativity is knowing that there is *more than one right answer*—and continually looking for the *next* right answer.

## Indexing Sessions

Sessions on indexing topics were fewer this year (four regular ses-

sions and one post-conference workshop), but no less popular. I was able to catch parts of two of the regular sessions. In “Benchmarks of a Quality Index,” Janet Perlman shared indexing methodology tips and answered many questions from her capacity audience (80+), giving guidance on what makes an index usable and useful, and how to improve one that isn’t. Freya Winsberg’s “Six Steps to Producing an Index” continues to be a big draw at the conference (over 100 participants); it offers numerous hands-on exercises to help new indexers identify and format relevant entries.

I gave a repeat presentation of a “How to Edit an Index” workshop; the attendees’ many questions and keen interest in the topic were very gratifying. The full-day post-conference session on indexing basics also went smoothly, thanks in large part to DuPont colleague Karen Hamilton’s willingness to jump in as co-presenter at short notice, replacing Sandy Gallagher, who was recovering from pneumonia.

Due to a schedule conflict, I was unable to attend the other indexing session of the conference, Anne Barrett’s “IXGen for Beginners Plus Cool Tips.” Given the number of folks who use FrameMaker for their document (and index) preparation, sessions on IXGen and related topics will continue to be much in demand in the future. (See Anne’s related article on IXGen, next page.)

Plans are underway to bring an increased number of indexing sessions to the 2002 conference. These include an “indexing evaluation” workshop that will give attendees the opportunity to bring one of their indexes to the session and receive a one-on-one critical evaluation by an experienced indexer. We also plan to bring back the popular “question and answer” forum, featuring a panel of indexing experts who will address your specific indexing concerns. Stay tuned for more information in future issues of this newsletter!

## SIG Business

During the business meeting one morning, a number of ideas were raised by SIG members for ways to make the SIG more active and address more of the needs of its members. These included suggestions for future conference topics, newsletter and Web site features, SIG member surveys, and competitions, among other things. We hope to be able to put some of these into action during the coming year.

I hope to see many of you at next year’s conference in Nashville. Mark May 5–8, 2002, on your calendars. In the meantime, if you have ideas about how the SIG can better meet your needs for indexing information, get in touch with your regional SIG representative, or contact me directly at 302-636-1149 (e-mail [dulcibill@aol.com](mailto:dulcibill@aol.com) or [william.l.collins@usa.dupont.com](mailto:william.l.collins@usa.dupont.com)).

## Special Notice:

We will be publishing the print and online copies of the SIG newsletter simultaneously. After two issues, we will put out a survey to ask which version you use most, to find out whether we should continue with our print edition. Please keep track for us, so that we can get your input in May.

## A to Z :STC's Indexing SIG

*A to Z* is published three times yearly (January, May, and September) by the Society for Technical Communication’s Indexing Special Interest Group.

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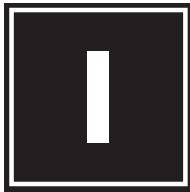
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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION



# XGen: Indexing Tool for Frame

by Anne C. Barrett  
Senior Technical Writer  
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Software Evaluated: IXgen™ (for FrameMaker 5.5/6.0)

Operating Systems Supported: Windows, SUN OS, SUN Solaris

Developer: Frank Stearns Associates (FSA)

URL: <http://home.pacifier.com/~franks/index.html>

Cost: varies by number of licenses; see article

Back when I started earning my techwriter's tuppence by working in FrameMaker, there came an early moment when somebody mentioned that I also would be responsible for indexing those docs. Well, so that's OK, I thought, nodding. I'd done indexes before and successfully translated those skills into Word, Interleaf, and assorted and sundry other tools. How hard could it be in Frame?

And then the moment of truth: I discovered that as good as Frame is in so many ways, its indexing functionality is ... well, perhaps not all an indexer could wish for. As the Frame-experienced among us know, it's not the creation of the individual markers that causes heartache; it's the editing. You have to go back into individual index markers in order to make changes. There's no way to see all the marker text entries at once, and no way to delete more than one marker at a time.

\*sigh\*

Fast forward. Enter IXGen, stage right. In 1994, Frank Stearns Associates (now FSA) introduced this add-on Frame utility product, which I and everyone around me at the time pronounced "icks-jen." (Even the most casual cognoscenti now know that it's pronounced "EYE-EX-jen.") Whatever (I thought); this was *more like it*. I became a fan that year and have used it ever since.

Permit me to elaborate. Here's what you can do with IXGen:

- ❖ Generate an editable marker list. This is the centerpiece of IXGen's functionality. The list is a Frame-type table. You can edit, delete, and even add markers in this table.
- ❖ Reinsert your list of edited markers in your source file.
- ❖ Split multiple entries per marker into individual markers. This makes it easier to scan for entries in the IXGen list, which is alphabetical.
- ❖ Create markers from paragraph and character tags. This enables you to generate new markers based on paragraph or character type.

- ❖ Expand, edit, and then collapse markers. Expanded markers are readable and editable in text. (They look somewhat like Word index entries.) When you're done editing the expanded markers, collapse them back to regular, Frame "T" markers.
- ❖ Permute (rotate) marker text. This function automatically rearranges words in markers to form variant entries.
- ❖ Create markers from keywords. You generate new markers by searching for keywords (interactive or batch modes). You can base keyword lists on existing indexes.
- ❖ Control capitalization. Capitalize or decapitalize index entries created from your paragraph tags or keywords, then go back and use Frame's global Find/Replace options to capitalize only certain terms.

I find that by using IXGen I can create an Alpha-level index in minutes, as opposed to the hours it was taking before.

*Continued on next page*

Keep in mind that having IXGen installed does not prevent you from continuing to create index markers in Frame. When building an index in FrameMaker, I generally work first in Frame, then IXGen, then Frame, and so on. IXGen is excellent for creating cross-indexed entries, deleting multiple entries at once, and for large-scale changes such as changing the level 1 entry of a group of subentries. Frame is good for working on one entry at a time, and for visualizing how your subentries are lining up.

IXGen's most important feature is that it picks up any index marker in the document and displays it in a Frame-type table. (In fact, it will pick up any Frame marker type to which you direct it, not just index

markers.) After editing your entry text in IXGen's table, you direct IXGen to apply your changes to the original markers, which remain in your source file throughout the operation.

## Working with the Table

Figure 1 shows an IXGen table. This is where you can edit your marker text, including global Search/Replace options. You also can delete markers or groups of markers in the table by deleting the content in the right-hand cells. It's important not to alter the text in the three left-most columns, however. This is the information that enables IXGen to identify and to show and replace the contents of individual markers, or delete makers.

**(TIP! Note that Spelling Checker is nearly unusable in the IXGen table. Even if you change the font in the navigation columns to "None," Spelling Checker hangs up on the colons separating the differing levels of entries.)**

One way to build fast indexes is to use the Create Markers from Tags on your paragraph tags for headings and chapter titles. (See Figure 2.) If your style guide calls for indexing warnings, cautions, and captions, this functionality makes it easy to do so. Then use the Capitalization function to drop the caps, and then build a new IXGen table in which to edit these strings into usable index entries.

NAVIGATION GATE	MARKER TYPE	SOURCE DOCUMENT	EDIT MARKER TEXT IN THIS COLUMN
	Index	A...CWorkshop\test.fm	bears, care and feeding;grizzly bears, care and feeding
	Index	A...CWorkshop\test.fm	panda bears, care and feeding

Figure 1: IXGen's table

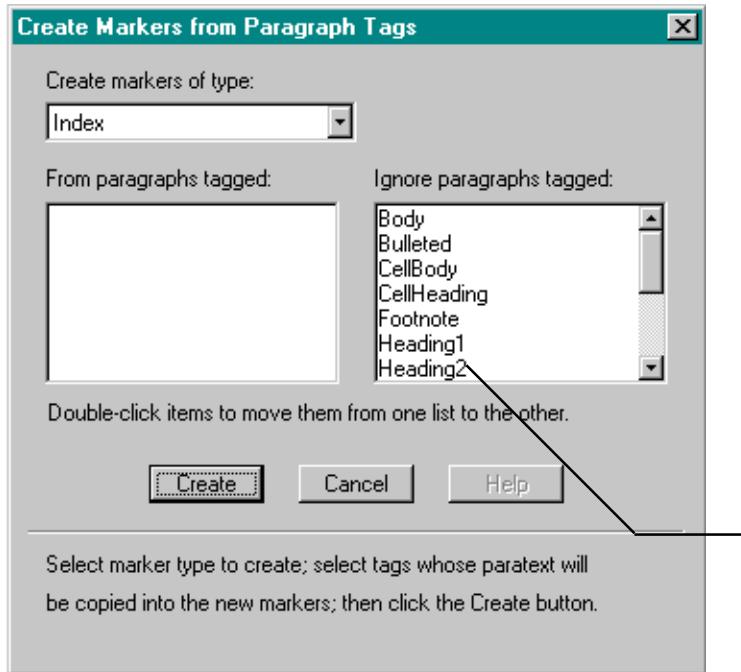


Figure 2: Creating markers from existing headings

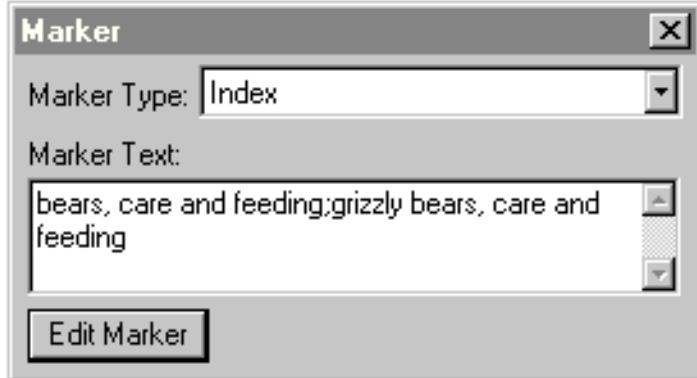


Figure 3: Multiple entries in a marker

Choose appropriate paragraph styles for creating index entries, such as headings.  
Do not choose ALL the styles.

**(TIP!** I've found that when starting with a document that's already indexed it's often much faster to strip out all the old markers and start over. And here's a neat tip: before any index markers exist, the Create Markers from Paragraph Tags feature is an excellent mechanism for checking and editing for parallel construction among headings, figure captions, and so on.)

## Adding and Splitting Entries

To build cross-indexed entries, add a semicolon and your new text after any entry in the table. This is quite handy. It does, of course, bring up the issue of how many entries you keep in a marker. I used to think nothing at all of maintaining several entries in my markers. (See Figures 1 and 3.) After working with IXGen for a few days, though, I found that any benefits of doing so were far, far outweighed by the visual clarity of one entry per IXGen table cell. Splitting entries also clusters hierarchical entries, making them easy to view and edit as a group. When I apply an IXGen table, therefore, I now habitually click the "Split multiple index entries into separate markers" checkbox. (See Figure 4.) In a flash, IXGen splits my new entries into standalone markers. The new markers are sited in the same location as the original marker from which they separated.

You can create a new marker in a source file to which you later apply an IXGen table. I've done that often (usually because I've returned from a meeting and forgotten that I had an IXGen table open). However, do not edit markers in the file if you have an IXGen table to apply. IXGen will replace your edited entry with whatever text is in its table for that marker.

**(TIP!** An easy way to see marker text without compiling an IXGen table is to use IXGen to expand the markers in place. This displays the contents of markers in the text. (See Figure 5.) Entry text is double-underlined. You can make changes without leaving the document, then collapse the markers.)

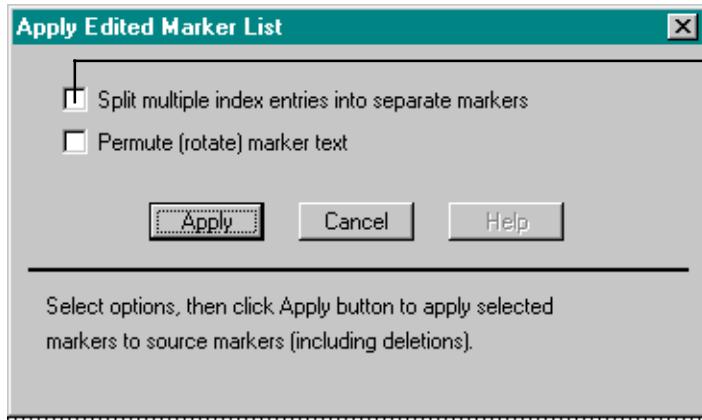


Figure 4 Splitting entries after editing the table, and applying edits to files

### A Turbo IXGen Indexing Technique

Here's Barrett's Unpatented and Cheerfully Distributed Method of Super-Fast Indexing:

1. Use IXGen to automatically build markers for all warnings, cautions, and (if your style guide dictates indexing these) figure and table captions.
  2. Using IXGen, edit these into appropriate wording for your index.
  3. Build markers for all chapter and appendix titles. Repeat Step 2.
  4. Build markers for all Level 1, 2, 3, and 4 headers. Repeat Step 2.
  5. Go through the document and index appropriate terms or concepts that do not appear in the headers.
  6. Because the markers IXGen creates are all at the first level, go through and create hierarchies.
  7. Create appropriate cross-indexed entries.
  8. Proof, edit, and clean up your index for publication.
- In a 300-page document, Steps 1, 3, and 4 can require all of 10 minutes altogether, often less. Step 2 takes time, but far less than it would without IXGen. The most time-consuming activities, understandably, are Steps 5 through 8.

Bears:New Mexico problems:food supplies:late frosts and Many bears in the state of New Mexico have come to lower elevations in search of food, due to the late frost that killed much of the higher elevations' berry crop last spring.¶

Figure 5: Expanded markers in text. These entries can be edited like any other text.

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## Permutation

IXGen's permutation function works best if all your index entries consist of one or two words. IXGen reverses the order of the words and adds a comma. Naturally, you'll have to use judgement because not all "flip-flops" of this type are appropriate. (For example, "first aid" doesn't work as "aid, first.") With longer phrases, IXGen presents versions in which each word has its turn in the lead position. A phrase such as "printing the error log" would come out as "printing the error log," "the error log, printing," "error log, printing the," and "log, printing the error." However, you can use the permutation function and then weed out or edit the ones that sound like translations from Martian. It is, after all, easy to delete entries from the IXGen table.

## Creating Markers from Keywords

Creating markers from keywords requires that you create a copy of the keyctrl.fm file from your <FrameMaker\_Directory>\Templates\Special directory. Then, in this copy:

1. List the keywords you wish to index, one per cell, in the table. As in any Frame table, you can add rows as you go.
2. In the right-most cell for each keyword, list alternate phrases you'd like to use as marker text for that word. Make each phrase its own paragraph inside the cell.
3. Save your keyword file.
4. Select IXGen > Markers from Keywords and select the saved keyword file from the list.

IXGen searches through the source text for occurrences of the keywords. When it finds a keyword, it gives you the option of which of your alternate phrases to use as the marker. You also can enter new text at this point. Any text you add is saved in your edited keyctrl.fm file.

### Cost

Here's information from the FSA Web page on pricing, current as of September 2001:

Quantity	Unix (Solaris/Sun OS)	Windows (95/98, NT, 2000)
1	\$299.00 first copy	\$199.00 first copy
2-4	\$179.00 each additional	\$149.00 each additional
5-9	\$119.00 each additional	\$99.00 each additional
10+	\$99.00 each additional	\$69.00 each additional

The FSA Web page includes further pricing examples. Discounts apply to licenses ordered at the same time.

Both the edtblist.fm and keyctrl.fm files open with detailed directions on the master page, which makes using them easy. However, IXGen does not come with online help. The IXGen User Guide is free and is available online, as is a demo version.

## Purchasing Information

You can purchase IXGen online—the only way you *can* purchase it, in fact—by going to the FSA Web page (<http://home.pacifier.com/~franks/index.html>). You download an executable file from here. You'll need a one-time password to complete installation. FSA sends you this when they receive either a credit-card payment or a corporate purchase order number. As IXGen unpacks itself, it installs several files in your FrameMaker directory, including a template for IXGen tables.

IXGen works only with Adobe FrameMaker and currently is sold in the following "flavors":

- ❖ FrameMaker 6.0 on Windows (95, 98 and NT)
- ❖ FrameMaker 5.0/5.1 on Windows (95 and NT)
- ❖ FrameMaker 5.5 or 5.0/5.1 for SunOS
- ❖ FrameMaker 5.5/6.0 or 5.0/5.1 on Solaris

It's not a huge piece of software, only about 1.2MB. It will, however, save you oodles of time in developing and editing indexes in Frame.

Anne C. Barrett is a senior member of STC and a long-time technical writer and indexer. She currently works at Cisco Systems, Inc., indexing all documentation for one of Cisco's business units. In her spare time she plays with wild bears. Anne has no relationship with FSA Tools other than that of a satisfied customer. She can be reached at [abarrett@cisco.com](mailto:abarrett@cisco.com).



## Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events provides information about meetings that offer technical communicators opportunities to gain or refine indexing skills. Please send notices of upcoming events to [jancw@wrightinformation.com](mailto:jancw@wrightinformation.com).

**Note:** Some Web addresses change between issues of this newsletter. Changed addresses may render some hyperlinks obsolete. Prices and other event details may also change before you read this article. Many Web sites also provide links to indexing events, which may not appear in this column.

- ❖ **October 5, 2001:** Indexing workshop at the Pubsnet training center in Tyngsboro, MA. Susan Holbert will lead a one-day workshop called *Indexing User Manuals and Online Information*. For more details, see the Pubsnet event listed on November 16 in this article.
- ❖ **October 15 – 16, 2001:** Interchange Conference in Boxborough, MA. During the conference, Susan Holbert will present a workshop called *Indexing Tips for Documents and Online Help*. See the Interchange Web site at <http://www.interchangeconference.com/> for more details. The workshop page is at <http://www.interchangeconference.com/schedule.htm>. Visit the conference site and complete the online registration form. If you lack access to the Internet, you

may write to UMass Boston, Division of Corporate, Continuing, and Distance Education, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You may also register over the telephone by calling (617) 287-7916. The conference costs \$349 for two days or \$279 for one day. Student registration costs \$99 for two days or \$59 for one day. The registration deadline is October 1, 2001. Registration after the deadline will include a \$25 late fee. If you cancel your registration on or before October 12, you will receive a full refund. No refunds will be given for cancellations received afterwards.

- ❖ **October 15 - 16, 2001:** Two-day preconference workshop on *FrameMaker Indexing*, Durham, NC. Fred Brown will be presenting this Frame indexing session as part of the annual FrameUsers Workshop. For more information and registration, please see <http://www.frameusers.com>.

- ❖ **October 18, 2001:** Indexing workshop in Brisbane, Australia. Lori Lathrop will present an indexing workshop called *Indexing Skills Workshop for Technical Communicators*. Before September 22, the workshop costs \$375 for single registrants and \$325 for group registrants. After September 22, the workshop costs \$425 for single registrants and \$375 for group registrants. (The listed

prices are in US dollars and late registrations are subject to availability.) Lori's Web site includes her workshop schedule (<http://www.indexingskills.com/wkshpsch.html>). If you lack Internet access, you can write to Lathrop Media Services at 7308-C East Independence Blvd., #316, Charlotte, NC 28227. Call (888) 345-INDX to see if seats are still available.

- ❖ **October 19, 2001:** Indexing workshop in Brisbane, Australia. Lori Lathrop will present an indexing workshop called *Advanced Indexing Skills Workshop for Technical Communicators*. Before September 22, the workshop costs \$345 for single registrants and \$300 for group registrants. After September 22, the workshop costs \$375 for single registrants and \$330 for group registrants. (The listed prices are in US dollars and late registrations are subject to availability.) See the Lathrop workshop listed on October 18 for contact information.
- ❖ **October 24, 2001:** *Single-Source Indexing*, paper by Jan C. Wright, given during the Association for Computing Machinery's SIGDOC 2001 conference, "Communicating in the New Millennium" in Santa Fe, N.M. Program information for SIGDOC and the associated IEEE documentation conference can be found at <http://www.acm.org/sigdoc/>.

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■ **November 7, 2001:** Society of Indexing workshop in London, England. The workshop will take place from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm at Quaker International Center, 1 Byng Place, London WC1. The workshop tutor is Ann Hudson MA PGCE. This workshop is for anyone learning how to index or working on the first or second unit of the Society's training course. You can find out more at the Society of Indexers' Web site (<http://www.socind.demon.co.uk/workshop.htm>) or by writing to the workshop administrator, Julie Miller. Julie's address is 6 Hall Street, Dalton-in-Furnace, Cumbria, LA15 8RS. Her telephone is 01229 464878. The workshop costs £349 for two days and £279 for one day. Student registration costs £99 for two days and £59 for one day.

Please try to book before October 6, 2001.

■ **November 16, 2001:** Indexing workshop at the Doubletree-Bellevue in Bellevue, WA. Lori Lathrop will present an indexing workshop called *Indexing Skills Workshop for Technical Communicators*. Before October 26, the workshop costs \$300 for single registrants and \$275 for group registrants. After October 26, the workshop costs \$335 for single registrants and \$325 for group registrants. (The listed prices are in US dollars and late registrations are subject to availability.) See the Lathrop workshop listed on October 18 for contact information.

■ **November 16, 2001:** Indexing workshop at the Pubsnet training center in Tyngsboro, MA. Susan Holbert will lead a one-day workshop called *Indexing*

*User Manuals and Online Information.* This workshop will occur in a PC lab environment. Susan Holbert has tailored this indexing workshop for technical writers. The workshop costs \$399. See the Pubsnet Web site for more information (<http://www.pubsnet.com/CourseSpec.ASP?CourseID=23>). If you lack access to the Internet, you may write to Pubsnet at One Bridgeview Circle, Unit 2, Tyngsboro, MA 01879. You may also call them at (978) 649-8555 or e-mail them at [info@pubsnet.com](mailto:info@pubsnet.com).

■ **November 28 – 29, 2001:** *Indexing I* (EEI class, session 30112U) in Alexandria, VA. For \$695, the participant will learn how to create an index. For more information, write to Editorial Experts, Inc. at 66 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 500 Alexandria, VA

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❖ **November 29 – 30, 2001:** Indexing workshop in Burlington, MA. Seth Maislin of NSight, Inc. will present a workshop called *Indexing Technical Documentation-Key Wording* (TD14E). The workshop lasts from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and costs \$705. You may contact NSight, Inc. via e-mail: [training@nSightWorks.com](mailto:training@nSightWorks.com), or by telephone (781) 283-6300. You may also write to NSight Inc. at 1 Van de Graaff Drive, Suite 202 Burlington, MA 01803. See <http://www.nsightworks.com/training/workshops/descriptions/workshopsDesc.html#TD14> for more information about the indexing workshop.

❖ **November 30, 2001:** *Indexing II*, (EEI class, session 30120K) in Alexandria, VA. For \$395, the participant will learn how to edit an index. See the EEI event listed on November 28 –29 for contact information. Visit their Web site at <http://www.eeicomunications.com/training/class/advind.html> for more details about this class.

❖ **January 17 – 18, 2002:** Indexing workshop in Burlington, MA. Seth Maislin of NSight, Inc. will present a workshop called *Indexing Technical Documentation-Key Wording* (TD14F). The workshop lasts from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and costs \$705. See the NSight workshop listed on

November 30, for contact information. See <http://www.nsightworks.com/training/workshops/descriptions/workshopsDesc.html#TD14> for more details about the indexing workshop.

❖ **February 10 – 14, 2002:** WinWriters Conference at the Sheraton Hotel in Seattle, WA. The program is still taking shape, but the conference Web site indicates that it will include indexing sessions (<http://www.winwriters.com>). See the subject area of Content Development. Registration opens on October 15, and is limited to 1000 participants. Register early if you plan to attend.

V  
*isit our  
Web site*

*at its NEW  
location.  
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[WWW.STCSIG.ORG/](http://WWW.STCSIG.ORG/)  
[idx/](http://WWW.STCSIG.ORG/idx/)

A to Z welcomes letters from members of the STC Indexing SIG and others interested in indexing. Printed letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the STC Indexing SIG and may be edited for length. Letters may be sent to Jan Wright at [jancw@wrightinformation.com](mailto:jancw@wrightinformation.com), or snail-mailed to the address on p. 10.



## ALL FOR PROPOSALS

AMERICAN SOCIETY  
OF INDEXERS

34th Annual Conference  
May 16-19, 2002  
Moody Gardens  
GALVESTON, TEXAS

The American Society of Indexers is a national membership organization promoting excellence in indexing. Our technological society confronts us with chaotic and unorganized information. Professional indexers use creative intellectual analysis to provide efficient tools—indexes in many shapes and forms—to allow seekers to access this information and turn it into knowledge.

Our conferences are well-attended and aim to provide a broad range and depth of information. ASI is looking for topics of interest to indexers and information specialists of all kinds and levels of expertise, from beginners to veterans. In addition, this year ASI will be offering an editorial track, aimed at both indexers and editors, in order to further our appreciation and understanding of each others' work.

The deadline for submissions is November 1, 2001. For additional information about possible topics, what to include in your proposal, and publication of conference proceedings, check our Web site at [www.asindexing.org](http://www.asindexing.org) and click on "annual meetings," or contact Kate Mertes, VP/PE of ASI (snail-mail: 118 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA, 22314; email: [kmertes@hotmail.com](mailto:kmertes@hotmail.com); phone: (703) 549-4574).

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## A to Z : The Newsletter of STC's Indexing SIG

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